

## The Greening of the South: the Recovery of Land and Forest

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*The Greening of the South: The Recovery of Land and Forest*, by Thomas D. Clark. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1984. xvi, 168 pp. Illustrations, bibliographical essay, index. \$20.00 cloth.

Thomas D. Clark, a respected historian of the South, wrote, in *The Greening of the South*, a sensitive and, in many respects, an engaging narrative of the decline and rebirth of southern forests since the end of the Civil War. Clark makes no pretense to being an unbiased observer. He acknowledges that to a considerable extent his own Mississippi roots influenced his perspective. Moreover, he announces in the preface that "I have written this book out of personal conviction that the South's land and renewable forest resources are its most durable birth-rights" (xiv). His purpose is more to lament and to rejoice, to condemn and to praise, than it is to analyze and to evaluate, to explain and to understand. The result is an interesting and informative, if not entirely satisfying, account of a neglected topic.

Before the 1880s lumbering was of minor importance to the southern economy. The few thousand sawmills in operation at the start of the decade had small capacities and modest timber needs. With the 1876 revision of the Southern Homestead Law permitting unrestricted cash entry, northern lumbermen and turpentine extractors—"Carpetbaggers of the Woods," as Clark calls them—began flooding into the South to harvest the virgin forests. Over the next forty years, climaxing with World War I and its heavy lumber demands, they moved across the region leaving in their wake cutover and charred landscapes that earlier had supported dense stands of hardwoods and pines. Then, as the postwar depression set in, southerners came to the realization that the forest resources they once considered inexhaustible were nearly depleted. That shock moved some to push for conservation and reforestation projects and others to seek new uses for the fast-growing yellow pine. These efforts gained momentum in the 1930s when the Franklin D. Roosevelt administration launched the Civilian Conservation Corps and the Tennessee Valley Authority. Largely as a result of government programs and the tireless efforts of conservationists and forest scientists, the South witnessed a rebirth of its forests and a revival of its wood-products industries in the post-World War II era. Especially important were the development of a chemical process for making white paper from the southern pine and the rise of a wood pulp and newsprint industry. But the South had learned its lesson. Forest industries, now as concerned with maintenance of a renewable resource as they were with its exploitation, implemented modern planning and management techniques to ensure that timber replacement kept pace with harvesting.

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Bits and pieces of this story may be found elsewhere, but Clark's book is the first one to bring them together into a single volume. It provides useful insights into forest use and management over the past century. It highlights the contributions of such people as Charles T. Mohr, Henry Hardtner, and Charles Holmes Herty to the revival of southern forests and wood-use industries. It offers one perspective on forest history. Clark must know, however, that not all lumbermen in the late nineteenth century were "carpetbaggers"; southerners as well as northerners engaged in forest exploitation. More importantly, rather than condemning one generation of lumbermen for exhausting southern forests and praising a later generation for rational resource use, Clark might have explored more fully the economic determinants that caused the two generations to behave differently.

VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY

DONALD L. WINTERS

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